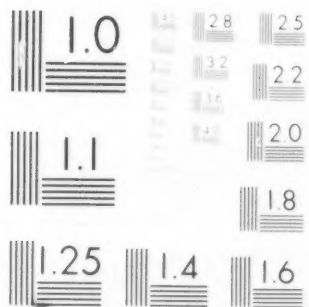


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ABSTRACT

Berkeley undergraduates were surveyed in 1970 and again in 1973 to identify determinants of the decision to leave college among four types of leavers: failing transfers, failing dropouts, transfers in good standing, and dropouts in good standing. The following student characteristics are analyzed: family background, academic preparation, family values, personality maturity, relationship to family, commitment to college, educational aspirations, social integration, satisfaction, orientation to college, political orientation, and alternative lifestyles. Those leaving in good standing more often hold nonconventional political and lifestyle orientations, and are less often vocationally oriented than those who remain enrolled. It is suggested that these persons have departed from popularly institutionalized life-cycles and are therefore less constrained to remain in college. (Author/SPG)

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A DROPOUT IS A DROPOUT IS A DROPOUT . . . A COMPARISON OF FOUR DIFFERENT
TYPES OF UNIVERSITY DROPOUTS*

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ABSTRACT

Berkeley undergraduates sampled in 1970 and again in 1973 are analyzed to identify determinants of the decision to leave college among four types of leavers: failing transfers, failing dropouts, transfers in good standing, and dropouts in good standing. Those leaving in good standing more often hold non-conventional political and lifestyle orientations, and are less often vocationally oriented than those who remain enrolled. It is suggested that these persons have departed from popularly institutionalized life cycles and are therefore less constrained to remain in college.

Numerous reviews of the literature on dropouts from higher education have produced a reasonably coherent composite picture of "the dropout" (Knoell, 1960, 1966; Marsh, 1966; Sexton, 1965; Spady, 1971; Tinto, 1975; Waller, 1964). Generally, dropouts are compared to those remaining in school as: coming from families of lower socioeconomic status, having lower intelligence; having poorer pre-college academic preparation as indicated by high school grades, scholastic aptitude test scores, and high school quality; having lower college achievement; being less cosmopolitan (coming from smaller towns, coming from smaller high schools, being less secular), coming from families which are more religious but less warm and supportive; having lower educational aspirations and lower commitment to remain in college; viewing education vocationally rather than as a place for intellectual and personal expansion; spending less time studying; being less well socially integrated; being less mature (less rational, self-controlled, self-confident, independent, involved and tolerant); having ideas and personal attributes which do not "fit" the college culture; and being less satisfied with the college or university they leave.

On the whole, this picture makes sense if one assumes both that colleges are centers of intellectual growth which demand mature self-directed learning by students and that all students wish to complete college, dropping out primarily because of personal or academic failure. Indeed, these assumptions form an implicit model underlying much research in this area. In point of fact, however, students leave college for a variety of reasons, some of which do not easily mesh with this composite picture. At least some students, for example, leave college despite being successful academically. Tinto (1975) reviews studies of such voluntary withdrawals, concluding that they sometimes score higher on

ability or grade performance measures and display greater intellectual interest than those who remain enrolled. These findings are quite different from those of most studies, which treat school leavers as a single, undifferentiated group. Generalizations drawn from the majority of studies in this area may therefore apply only to those who leave as failures, or worse, may confound distinct and perhaps contradictory patterns. This paper addresses these issues by asking whether different types of college leavers have different reasons for leaving and whether one or more types closely approximate the composite picture offered by the accumulated research in this field.

A further consideration not often noted is that the reasons students leave college may change over time. While the huge body of dropout research done in the '50s and '60s may not violate the assumption that students wanted to stay in school, leaving primarily because of failure, this assumption may be less appropriate to the '70s. In particular, the end of political activism on campuses and the move to greater vocational emphasis within a restricted economy may have made campuses less desirable places for those most committed to social change or personal lifestyle experimentation. Interests stimulated by the "counterculture" may have led some students away from campus. Male students in particular had newfound opportunity to pursue such interests in the late '60s and early '70s, with the abolition of college deferments and then the draft itself. Because the sample analyzed here is composed of males who attended college in the early '70s we will explore whether some students leave college primarily for political or lifestyle reasons.

Types of College Leavers

Our paper begins with the premise that analyzing different types of school leavers will lead us to differing conclusions as to the determinants of college leaving. Following Tinto's (1975) argument, we specify two criteria according to which we categorize school leavers: whether or not students leave as a result of academic failure and whether, after leaving, individuals remain out of college or transfer to another college or university. These dichotomies create four groups of school leavers: 1) academic failures who end their education 2) academic failures who transfer to another college, 3) students in good standing who end their education, and 4) students in good standing who transfer to another college. (Henceforth, this paper will use the term "school leaver" to indicate all who leave for any reason. The term "dropout" will be used to indicate only those who end their education. That is, school leavers are either "transfers" or "dropouts.")

The distinction between transferring and dropping out is important because dropouts give up or delay the college degree so important to later occupational opportunities, while transfers do not. The distinction between leaving in good standing and leaving with failing marks is important because those who leave voluntarily must have developed some reason of their own, while failures have ample external reason to leave. It is also a theoretically meaningful distinction because the traditional picture of college leavers has been that they are failures.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The data for this analysis come from a panel study of nearly 1,000 randomly selected males in the class of '74 at the University of California

at Berkeley. They were interviewed in November 1970, after just over one month at Berkeley, and again in June 1973. Thorough followup procedures produced a Time 2 response rate of 87 percent. This included 554 students who remained enrolled at Berkeley continuously during the period of study, 106 students who transferred to another college and 117 students who dropped out and remained out of any college. Another 67 students are omitted from this analysis. They left Berkeley for a time but returned by T2, making their status ambiguous. (See Ekland, 1964 for a study of students who take leaves of absence.)

Transfers and dropouts are categorized on the basis of their responses to T2 questions asking what they did after leaving Berkeley. Dropouts are those who reported they had attended no school since leaving Berkeley. About half of these persons say they have little or no intention of ever returning to school while the rest report they probably will return. We include all these as dropouts because we have no way of assessing whether they will carry through their intentions and because analysis would be severely limited by reduction of the dropout sample size.

Students are divided into "failing" and "in good standing" categories on the basis of the GPA they accumulated during their stay at Berkeley. Those scoring below 2.3 are considered failing; those above, in good standing. The sample contains almost no expulsions. Those we analyze as failing leavers therefore retained the option to remain for at least a time but had been made aware that their work was seriously deficient.

The survey included a wide range of personal background and attitude questions, allowing us to profile different types of school leavers on many of the dimensions relevant to past research findings. In Part I of

our analysis we construct these profiles by testing whether each of the four types of leavers identified above differed at Time 1 from those who remained enrolled at Berkeley. The second part of the findings section reports multivariate analysis of factors associated with leaving in good standing and leaving with failing grades. Multivariate analysis is rare in studies of college dropouts because the dependent variable -- leaving school or not -- is a dichotomy and does not therefore meet statistical assumptions required for standard regression procedures. The logit regression technique employed here is however suited precisely to the multivariate analysis of determinants of a dichotomous variable (see Theil, 1970; see also Wuthnow, 1977 for a concise description of this technique).

RESULTS PART I: PROFILES OF COLLEGE LEAVERS

We begin our analysis by testing whether T1 characteristics of students who left Berkeley by T2 differed significantly from those of students who remained enrolled. Those items on which at least one type of leaver differed significantly from continuing students are reported in Table 1. Other measures which are relevant to the previous literature on school leavers but not found to be significantly associated with any type of school leaver are reported in the text.

The comparisons reported below make it clear that any composite drawn from earlier research lumping together all leavers blurs quite distinct phenomena. They also cast doubt on the implicit model of college leavers as inadequate to cope with a valued, intellectually oriented setting which demands psychological maturity on the part of students. And they indicate that some leave college primarily for political/lifestyle reasons.

Family Background

The most consistently reported finding regarding students' origins, that lower status students leave school more often, is replicated here for failing dropouts and failing transfers. As Table 1 shows, family income and father's education, both indicators of socioeconomic status, differ for failures, but not for those who leave Berkeley in good standing. In fact, transfers in good standing reverse the pattern, having fathers with significantly higher education and perhaps higher incomes than fathers of continuous students. These findings suggest that family status directly affects only the probability of failing. This matter will be explored further in Part II of our analysis.

It is interesting to note that the one category of school leavers which draws a disproportionate number of minority students in this sample is failing transfers. It appears minority students fail somewhat more often than others but that their motivation to remain in college is high, leading them to transfer to other colleges.

Beyond these findings, family background variables show little association with school leaving. Failing dropouts only hail from smaller communities than continuous students. Size of the high school students attended is unrelated to leaving. Parents' religious commitment, interpreted by Gurin, Newcomb and Cope (1968) as negative indicator of cosmopolitanism, is unrelated to leaving in this sample. Finally, mothers' educational level is not significantly related to school leaving. Only indicators of family socioeconomic status appear to be related to leaving.

Academic Preparation

The second classic issue concerning school leavers, and that which is most directly associated with the leaver as failure image, is the nature of students' academic performance before and during college. We cannot consider college performance in this part of our analysis as it is built into the typology of school leavers. It may be noted however that less than one-third of the school leavers analyzed in Table 1 left Berkeley with college GPAs below 2.3. Two-thirds of these failing leavers transferred rather than dropping out. Thus, the pure case of one who "flunks out" of education altogether is a tiny minority in this sample.

As Table 1 indicates, findings concerning academic success in high school parallel those for family status. Failures, whether dropouts or transfers, had lower high school grade averages and lower verbal SAT scores. In three of four cases these differences are statistically significant.¹ Transfers and dropouts in good standing, on the other hand, had about the same level of high school achievement as continuous students. Here again, as might be expected given the nature of the variables under consideration, findings differentiate failures from others, not school leavers from those who remain.

Family Values

Psychological studies have reported that students who leave school tend to come from home environments which are less warm, less supportive, less open to dialogue, less secular, less encouraging of independent action by children, and either overbearing or overprotective compared to homes of those who remain in school. However, none of the home environment items included in this survey significantly differentiates any type of

school leaver from continuous students. The following items were tested: whether mother and father encouraged independence, gave lots of love, almost always found fault; whether students felt they could easily discuss issues with their parents; and the value students perceived each parent as placing on moral convictions, respectability, being well-to-do, being liked, being creative, and being successful.

In this instance, we fail to replicate previous findings for both voluntary leavers and failing leavers. One might argue that Berkeley's selectivity filters out those students whose family values caused them to do poorly in high school, but the sample includes widely varied family values, making this explanation improbable. A more interesting possibility is that one implicit assumption underlying this line of inquiry does not hold, namely that coping with college requires maturity and emotional stability on the part of students. If these personality attributes are not associated with success in the modern university, then factors believed to produce these attributes (e.g., the family values tested above) should not be expected to correlate with leaving school.

The Mature Personality

To explore whether maturity is a determinant of remaining in college tests were conducted on a broad range of items relevant to previous research which pictures college leavers as less independent, flexible, involved, self-confident, responsible or capable of controlling their impulses than those remaining in college. None of the items we were able to test showed any group of leavers differing significantly from continuous students. Items tested were: "I often act without stopping to think of the

consequences," how much the individual had "thought about (his) future plans," feelings of hopelessness, degree of self confidence, and the degrees to which students described themselves as energetic, caring, self-conscious, curious, creative, guilty, "tolerant, accepting of others," lazy, daring, procrastinating, considerate, foresightful, honest, empathetic, genuine, individualistic, uncompromising, and responsible. One item, describing oneself as "flexible," showed significant difference between failing dropouts and continuous students. The difference was small, however, and it ran in the direction opposite that predicted by previous research. The dropouts were more flexible.

In short, neither parental values, childrearing practices believed associated with raising flexible, self-motivated, mature children, nor direct measures of students' maturity as well as a broad range of other personality traits show significant differences between any type of school leaver and those remaining.

Relationship with Family

Returning to the family, we find that two indicators of student-felt closeness to their families follow the pattern of past findings, namely that leavers are less close to their families. All types of leavers appear to be less close to their families than continuing students, though the differences are significant only in the case of dropouts in good standing. It may be that those who remain in school do so partially because of the support of a close family. That is the conventional argument. None of these groups is, however, actually distant from parents. The variation lies simply in how very close they report being. Alternatively, it may be that those who remain in school are more conventional and less independent

than leavers, an interpretation which is suggested by the fact that they still accept the role "son" as an important element of their identities. Indeed, although personality traits related to maturity are not associated with leaving, dropouts, both failing and in good standing, ascribe to themselves the personality trait "conventional" significantly less often than do continuing students. Also both dropouts in good standing and transfers in good standing significantly less often report valuing "conventional morality."

Other indicators of students' relation to their parents do not differentiate any group of leavers from continuing students. Measures tested are: how close students felt toward their mothers, how much tension they felt with their mothers and with their fathers, and how they felt they "related" to their mothers and fathers "now as compared to high school." These null findings cast further doubt on the conventional interpretation that family supportiveness is the issue of importance. Tensions at home apparently do not matter. Subjective identity with "the family" does matter.

Commitment to College

It is not surprising that past research has found that greater commitment to complete a college education increases the likelihood of staying in college. Even so, our two indicators of such commitment partially contradict those findings. Those who leave with poor academic records did not differ at T1 from those who remain enrolled at Berkeley. These failing school leavers expressed the same T1 certainty about remaining in college and if anything greater T1 commitment to study hard. It appears that failures leave not because they initially intended to do so, but because they later

experienced considerable pressure to do so. As shown in Table 1, those dropouts and transfers who did satisfactory work but decided to leave nonetheless reported less T1 certainty that they would remain continuously enrolled and slightly less intention to study hard than did continuing students. These results are altogether logical. Failing leavers appear to be so heavily influenced by the fact of their failure that earlier intentions play little role in their leaving, while those doing satisfactory work freely choose whether to leave and therefore must intend to do so.

Educational Aspirations

A related and equally logical finding often reported is that students who desire more education tend more often than others to remain in college. In this instance dropouts follow the expected pattern, as do failing transfers. It is to be expected that dropouts would have lower aspirations, as these are persons who chose to leave education altogether. It is less clear why failing transfers also report lower T1 educational aspirations. It may be that lower aspirations produce lower effort and in turn failure, although we have already reported that intention to expend effort is not lower for this group. Alternatively, the lower aspirations expressed by this group may represent an adjustment to their poorer performance in high school. Aspiration and high school GPA are related only weakly, however ($r = .08$). A possibility that we cannot test is that their initial month at Berkeley convinced these students to lower their aspirations.

Social Integration

Authors such as Spady (1971) who propose flow chart models of the dropout process typically pose as central mediating processes students'

success or failure at becoming socially integrated into the college setting and their satisfaction with life in that setting. Our findings regarding social integration follow predicted patterns more fully than any of other findings reported so far. All four types of school leavers report fewer friends on campus after one month as freshmen than do those who ultimately remain students. Three types report significantly more often feeling lonely. School leavers do not report being more "left out" in the college setting, but they do report the simple human fact of having fewer and less satisfying social contacts in their new settings than do other students. This finding is striking in that the T1 measure occurred after such brief contact with the university.

Satisfaction

The abstract question of satisfaction produces somewhat different responses than the concrete matter of friendships. Asked to what extent they are "satisfied with life now," how often they feel hopeless, and how often they worry or feel psychosomatic symptoms such as irritability, school leavers of all types gave about the same answers as continuous students. However, when asked how much they liked Berkeley specifically, those who would later transfer reported significantly lower levels of satisfaction. Surprisingly, future dropouts do not at T1 report disliking the university. Apparently, matters other than satisfaction with the university take precedence for those who leave school altogether. If these people become dissatisfied, it is later in their college careers than our T1 measurement. Transfers, on the other hand, appear to conceptualize their situations as dissatisfaction with one specific university -- a condition which might change with a change of universities.

Orientation to College

Students' understanding of why college is valuable to them proves an important factor in nearly any discussion of higher education's effects on students (see Yankelovich, 1974). In the case of college leaving studies, the most common finding is that leavers are less intellectually oriented and view college more as vocational preparation than do continuing students. Suczek and Alfert (1966) find, however, that at one college those who leave in good standing are more intellectually oriented. Our findings show both these phenomena, illustrating again the value of separating different types of school leavers. Failing withdrawals are significantly less intellectually oriented and in one case significantly more vocationally oriented than continuing students. Those who leave in good standing on the other hand are significantly less vocationally oriented and report valuing intellectual matters as much as continuing students.

This finding may upset professors dedicated to university education as intellectual enlightenment, but it appears on the face of it that vocational orientation rather than intellectual orientation increases the tendency to remain in college, even at a highly selective college, unless failure eliminates the choice. The finding is also anomolous in that vocational orientation is negatively associated with academic success ($r = -.14$) but is also negatively associated with the voluntary decision to leave the university. All this casts further doubt on the implicit model of college leaving as failure to cope with a valued, intellectually demanding environment, and will be explored further in Part II of the analysis.

Political Orientation

We turn now to an issue which is not part of the conventional picture of college leavers but which seems particularly relevant to the time period of this study. We have hypothesized that some students who were involved in radical activism might leave school in the early '70s either because campuses had ceased being politically active or because the end of the draft gave them freedom to explore other settings. That prediction is borne out for those who left Berkeley in good standing. Both dropouts and transfers in good standing had demonstrated significantly more often by the T1 survey and voluntary dropouts rated themselves significantly more liberal than did continuing students.

This finding is especially interesting in that it flatly contradicts a frequent assertion of the literature: that school leavers, especially voluntary leavers, do not "fit" with the student culture (Hanson and Taylor, 1970; Rootman, 1972; Tinto, 1975). Instead, we find radicals choosing to leave Berkeley! At T1 52 percent of the Berkeley freshman class reported being liberal or radical while only 10 percent called themselves conservative. Yet 83 percent of T1 conservatives remain continuously enrolled at Berkeley while only 65 percent of liberals and 39 percent of radicals do so. Those who leave Berkeley may fail to "fit" the mold of the larger society, but as intellectually oriented liberals, they seem to fit the Berkeley culture and reputation better than those who remain enrolled.

Alternative Lifestyles

We can learn more about this phenomenon by examining interest in nonpolitical challenges to conventional life patterns. These did not

decrease in the early '70s as did political activism. We find counter cultural beliefs such as acceptance of astrology or mysticism unrelated to leaving college. Other measures are, however, clearly related to leaving in good standing. Both dropouts and transfers who leave in good standing were at T1 significantly more involved with the drug culture, using drugs more often and more often identifying with those who take drugs. Failing dropouts and transfers also appear to use drugs slightly more often, but the relationship is not significant. Another indicator of interest in non-conventional lifestyles, interest in communal living, follows the same pattern. Taken together with findings regarding college orientation and political orientation, these lifestyle items suggest that voluntary leavers are involved in non-conventional pursuits which they decide the university cannot satisfy.

SUMMARY

These findings point to the existence of two major sets of determinants of leaving college. One set includes factors associated with academic failure. Those who leave under pressure of failing grades seldom differ in motivation or intention from those who remain in college. With different findings we might have argued that lack of commitment led these people to expend little effort and therefore to fail. But these findings fit much better the interpretation that failing leavers are attitudinally almost identical to those who stay, differing primarily on background characteristics associated with academic failure in college.

The second set of determinants involves non-conventional orientations -- radical activism, involvement in alternative lifestyles, non-identification with the family, and placing little value on vocational preparation. These

factors are associated with the choice to leave college. Determinants of this choice presumably vary over time. In the '70s at least choice to leave college appears to be associated with the search for non-conventional life alternatives.

The fact that home environment and psychological maturity items have no impact in this sample is consistent with the strong association we find between non-conventionality and leaving college. Attending college is now part of millions of life cycles, not a rare privilege to be fought for. Maturity appears less an issue than whether or not one chooses to follow the conventional life path through institutionalized forms of education.

The major differences between types of leavers identified here involve failing vs. voluntary withdrawals. Surprisingly, transfers and dropouts differ only slightly after GPA is controlled. Transfers feel lonely slightly more often and are considerably less satisfied with Berkeley. Beyond that they appear very similar to dropouts. This surprising finding might be more easily explained if we knew what types of colleges transfers moved to. We can say that failure related and non-conventionality related factors operate nearly equally on transfers and dropouts. This suggests that these factors affect students by overriding institutionalized pressures to remain continuously enrolled in the college of their first choice (the most conservative educational life cycle) and that the decision of what alternative to seek is secondary.

RESULTS PART II: MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

In this section of the paper three issues are addressed: 1) What is the relationship between academic achievement and withdrawal from

college? In particular, do family status and pre-college achievement affect withdrawal directly or indirectly, through their effects on college grades? 2) Can we further specify the relationship between orientation to college and college GPA as they affect leaving college? 3) Do we find support for the interpretation that some students leave college for political/lifestyle reasons?

Because logit regression requires a relatively large number of cases, we combine all types of school leavers in the subsequent analyses. Through the inclusion of college GPA as a control in all analyses, we preserve the distinction between failing and non-failing withdrawals. The distinction between transferring and dropping out will, however, be abandoned. Therefore, those variables which tend to differentiate transfers and dropouts will not be further analyzed.

Background Factors and Academic Achievement

We approach the issue of academic achievement by testing whether background variables directly affect leaving college, or whether their effects are mediated through college achievement. Findings are clear cut. When college GPA is controlled, none of the background variables reported in Table 1 significantly affects leaving. Hierarchical comparisons of equations excluding and including each background variable locate no significant reductions in x^2 values.

It appears from these findings that family and high school performance variables ought not to appear in analyses of the reasons why students leave college. Rather, these factors may belong only to the analysis of factors determining college achievement. Once the effects of achievement are accounted for, background factors add no information about college leaving.

The matter of pre-college achievement must be explored further, however, because work by Davis (1966) suggests that achievement in high school should not be expected to have simple, direct effects on college leaving, but rather should conditionalize the effects of college grades on leaving.

High School Grades and Frog Pond Analysis. The "frog pond" perspective argues that students accustomed to performing poorly in high school are unlikely to be upset at doing poorly in college. Those who suffer great relative deprivation, however, may feel the effect of college GPA more strongly. We explore this possibility by testing several models specifying frog pond interactions between high school and college achievement levels. The best fit and indeed the simplest formulation is provided by the model which specifies that the distinction between failing and non-failing GPA (below or above 2.3) affects leaving for all students and that in addition the entire range of GPA affects leaving among those students who were high achievers in high school. This model produces an x^2 of 16.5 with 23 degrees of freedom, placing the probability above .8 that all observed variation unaccounted for by the model is due to random error.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

This model, as graphed in Figure 1, supports the frog pond thesis only in part. It is not the case that the severity of decline in GPA between high school and college predicts leaving. Those who were weak in high school leave more often regardless of college GPA. It is the case, however, that college GPA affects successful high school students much more than it affects weak high school students. Weak high school students seem affected only by their failure or non-failure in college.

Non-failure decreases the leave:stay ratio among these students by a factor of 4.0. Among strong high school students, the step between failing GPA and GPA of 2.3-2.7 decreases the leave:stay ratio by the much larger factor of 7.7. Moreover, for this group only, each increase in GPA further decreases that ratio so that almost none of those who are highly successful in college leave.

While these findings could be interpreted as supporting a relative deprivation model, they more closely approximate the interpretation that those most accustomed to success in the educational system are more vulnerable to that system's feedback to them (grades). Successful high school students in this study accept the institutionalized meaning attached to college grades, and their choices are seriously influenced by them. On the other hand, students who did poorly in high school but nevertheless attended Berkeley have probably already constructed for themselves some buffer against institutionalized meanings concerning educational success or failure. For them, the issue is simply whether they perform well enough to continue.

Orientation to College

The issue of whether students view their college education primarily as vocational preparation, as opposed to intellectual or personal growth, holds particular interest here because it appears that different types of school leavers differ in opposite directions from those who stay. Table 1 showed failing leavers more vocationally oriented and less intellectually oriented than those who remain in school, while voluntary leavers are less vocationally oriented and equally intellectually oriented. Since college is typically assumed to be the center of intellectual pursuit,

the possibility that vocational orientation, not intellectual interest, most influences students' decisions to remain in college has serious ramifications for our understanding of the college experience (see Meyer, 1977).

Testing the possibility that vocational orientation² and college GPA interact to determine tendency to leave college, we find the best fit with the model graphed in Figure 2. We see there that GPA has greater impact on those who are more vocationally oriented than on others. Among the most vocationally oriented, those in good standing have a leave:stay ratio of .24:1. The ratio for failing students is 2.06:1, 8.6 times higher. Among the least vocationally oriented, the leave:stay ratio is only 2.1 times greater for those with failing GPAs than for others. Beyond the distinction between failing and non-failing grades, GPA has no impact on leaving.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Why more vocationally oriented students are so much more affected by GPA cannot be determined completely here. One possibility is that vocational orientation is associated with relatively conservative acceptance of institutionalized meaning systems, including the meaning of grades. This is consistent with the fact that vocationally oriented students are more politically and socially conservative than others (Simpson, 1977). This interpretation is supported by the fact that vocational orientation and the importance students place on grades are highly correlated (.47). This line of reasoning could explain why for the bulk of students, those not facing failure, vocational orientation has greater holding power than other orientations. Remaining in college and preparing for an occupation are both conventional life paths. It is possible to pursue

intellectual or personal growth outside the university. It is less possible to pursue conventional professional credentials outside the university.

A second, related possibility is that vocationally oriented students may take college more seriously, leading them to work to their capacity. When grades come in, one who has worked as hard as he considers possible cannot tell himself he'll stay in school and bring up his grades by working harder. Exploring this possibility, we find a correlation of .33 between T1 vocational orientation and students' reports of how hard they plan to work in college. Perhaps this fact in addition to a general predisposition to take seriously formal messages from the university leads vocationally oriented students to leave more often than others upon receiving notice that they are doing failing work.

The Intention to Remain in Enrolled. Since T1 vocational orientation is associated with plans to remain in college a full four years or not ($r = .38$), it is possible that controlling students' T1 plans might eliminate the effects of vocational orientation on leaving. Testing this possibility, we find it not correct but also locate one of the paper's most intriguing findings, graphed in Figure 3. The preferred model to describe the effects of plans to remain in school, vocational orientation, and GPA on leaving includes an interaction between plans and GPA, an interaction between vocational orientation and GPA, and an additional effect of failing GPA in interaction with vocational orientation. The model produces a χ^2 of 17.0 with 27 degrees of freedom ($p \geq .9$).

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE.

Values estimated under this model show among other things that for students with weak commitment to remain enrolled and relatively low

vocational orientation, GPA in the above failing range is positively associated with leaving. That is, quite unlike the traditional model of school leaver as failure, leaving is associated with success in this case. Presumably, success gave these relatively non-conventional persons greater security to try their wings.

Those shown in Figure 3 to behave most in accordance with institutional expectations are those who entered Berkeley with strong intentions to remain and with high vocational orientation. They remained enrolled more often than others and were affected in the expected way by the grades they received. These people, like the successful high school students analyzed earlier, appear to accept institutionalized understandings of the value of college education and college grades. They are therefore heavily influenced by the university's feedback to them.

We see now why Figure 2 showed no effect of GPA except the failing non-failing distinction. Different students are differently affected by the non-failing range of grades, as shown in Figure 3. Those accepting conventional, institutionalized interpretations of their experience are affected as might be expected, but others reverse expectations, leaving more often when more successful. This interaction between conventionality and GPA makes it clear that this sample does include distinctly different types of school leavers.

Political and Lifestyle Factors

We have shown that individuals who at T1 thought it possible they might leave school early and who attend college for non-vocational reasons leave more often than others. We have attached the term "non-conventional" to these individuals, implying an interpretation growing out of the correlates

of leaving presented in Table 1. We move now to test whether associations between leaving and political and lifestyle non-conventionality are spurious. If these factors retain no effect after controls, our use of the term non-conventional to describe these school leavers might be misleading.

In fact, after controlling GPA, vocational orientation and plans to leave or stay, political orientation, identification with the drug culture and identification with one's family (included as indicator of a conventional life cycle for college freshmen) each retain significant impact on leaving. Also, none of these conventionality indicators eliminates the effects of the others. They share the greatest part of their impact on leaving, but each retains a separate effect.

Beyond that, when we specify the effects of each of these indicators on leaving, controlling for GPA and vocational orientation, we find the preferred model is identical in each case to the model involving T1 plans to remain enrolled (Figure 3). Particular values generated under the model vary with the item tested, but in each case the interaction between GPA and vocational orientation remains and the conventionality indicator interacts with GPA in the above failing range such that higher GPA reduces the leave:stay ratio more among conventional than among non-conventional persons.

The fact that T1 political liberalism, involvement with drugs, non-identification with the family, and openness to leave school before completion of a degree are associated with each other and all affect leaving in the same way lends credence to the interpretation that some students leave as the result of non-conventional values or life goals. As noted earlier, two-thirds of the leavers in this sample left "in good standing." Of those, the majority are liberal or radical, one-fourth identify with

drug users, and nearly one-half fail to identify with their families. It appears that in this study a rather large proportion of all leavers leave for political or lifestyle reasons.

CONCLUSION

The hypotheses which guided this study have for the most part been supported by our findings. Failing leavers are indeed very different from those who leave in good standing. Different elements of the "composite dropout" apply to each and on occasion the two types differ in opposite directions from those who remain enrolled. Transfers and dropouts differ from each other less than expected, but here too, some facets of the composite apply only to transfers.

We also find a set of items which we argue indicate non-conventionality to be associated with leaving in good standing. While failing withdrawals appear similar to persisters except on those items which produce low grades in college, withdrawals in good standing differ on a whole range of attitude and value items, most of which illustrate their interest in non-standard life pursuits. Whether this is a phenomenon of the '70s, post-draft era we cannot say, but the phenomenon clearly exists.

The implicit model underlying much research on college leavers holds that college is a valued social location which demands psychological maturity and intellectual commitment on the part of students. Leavers are seen as failures, academically or personally. Such a model has little value applied to the sample studied in this paper. Academic failure does lead to withdrawal, but many successful students leave also. Maturity is irrelevant to any category of leavers, and vocational orientation, not intellectual interest, holds people in college. Even so, some students

act in ways consistent with the model in that they apparently want to remain enrolled and are likely to leave only after receiving poor grades. In one way or another, these are the relatively conventional students who accept the institutionalized meaning of college and college grades -- people who succeeded in high school and developed no buffers against formal feedback from the college, who are oriented to college as vocational training, who see grades as important, who plan to work hard in college, who plan to stay enrolled continuously, who are political moderates or conservatives, who use few drugs and who identify with their families. They appear to be persons following the conventional life cycle through a mass institution.

In contrast to these students are the relatively non-conventional leavers. While we cannot say precisely why they leave college, we can say that their decision to leave is less constrained by conventional definitions of educational life cycles. Our findings that non-conventional students voluntarily leave Berkeley contradict arguments that voluntary leavers do not "fit" the student culture. There is, however, a sense in which our findings do support this formulation. These non-conventional voluntary leavers fail to fit not so much the local culture, as the larger educational institution. On a more conventional campus than Berkeley these same students would appear out of step with the culture. Because this study was conducted at a liberal campus valuing non-conventionality we are able to separate the local culture from the conceptions institutionalized within a mass educational system oriented toward credentialling students. It appears the latter is the context within which "fit" becomes an issue. Those who do not accept institutionalized meanings interpreting their

educational activities are freer than others to depart from the typical life cycle also institutionalized in the educational system.

FOOTNOTES

1. Since the sample is especially small for failing dropouts, one should take care not to assume the absence of statistical significance indicates that no relationship exists.
2. We test vocational orientation rather than intellectual interest because the former item was asked in terms of reasons why students value college whereas the latter was asked simply as a general interest question.

Table 1. Four Types of School Leavers Contasted with Continuing Students¹

Variable	Continuing Students	Failing Dropouts	Dropouts in Good Standing	Failing Transfers	Transfers in Good Standing
<u>Background Variables</u>					
Income (7=highest)	5.2	3.9**	5.0	4.0*	5.8
Father's education (7=highest)	4.7	3.8*	4.5	4.1*	5.3*
Minority status (% black, chicano or native American)	3.3	5.3	3.3	21.7*	3.6
Size community where attended high school (7=largest)	3.4	2.5*	3.0	3.0	3.6
<u>Academic Preparation</u>					
High school GPA (1=C or lower; 7=A)	5.3	4.6**	5.3	4.7**	5.3
Verbal SAT score	584	540	603	530**	597
<u>Relations with Family</u>					
"Identify" with family? (% "yes")	75%	63	54**	64	64
Feel close to father (4=closest)	3.0	2.8	2.6*	2.8	2.8
<u>Commitment to College</u>					
Plan to remain en- rolled? (3=definite 2=unsure, 1= probably leave)	2.7	2.5	2.1**	2.7	2.3**
How hard plan to study? (4=hardest)	3.1	3.3	2.9*	3.3	3.0

Table 1. CONTINUED

Variable	Continuing Students	Failing Dropouts	Dropouts in Good Standing	Failing Transfers	Transfers in Good Standing
<u>Educational Aspirations</u>					
Degree want (1=AB, 2=MA, 3=higher)	2.6	2.2*	2.3*	2.2*	2.4
GPA want in college (4.0=A)	3.5	3.0	3.2*	3.2*	3.4
<u>Social Integration</u>					
Number of close friends at school	3.5	3.1*	3.2**	3.2*	3.2**
How often feel lonely (4=most often)	2.3	2.2	2.5*	2.7*	2.9**
<u>Satisfaction</u>					
How well like Berkeley (5=most)	4.3	4.2	4.3	3.8**	3.6**
<u>Orientation to College</u>					
How much value college as preparation for an occupation (4=highest)	3.2	3.3	2.7**	3.5**	2.8**
How much value intellectual activity (4=highest)	2.8	2.3*	2.9	2.4**	2.8
<u>Political Orientation</u>					
Self reported orientation (1=most radical, 11=most conservative)	4.6	4.7	3.7**	4.6	4.2
Ever been in demonstration? (% "yes")	29	21	53**	20	44*

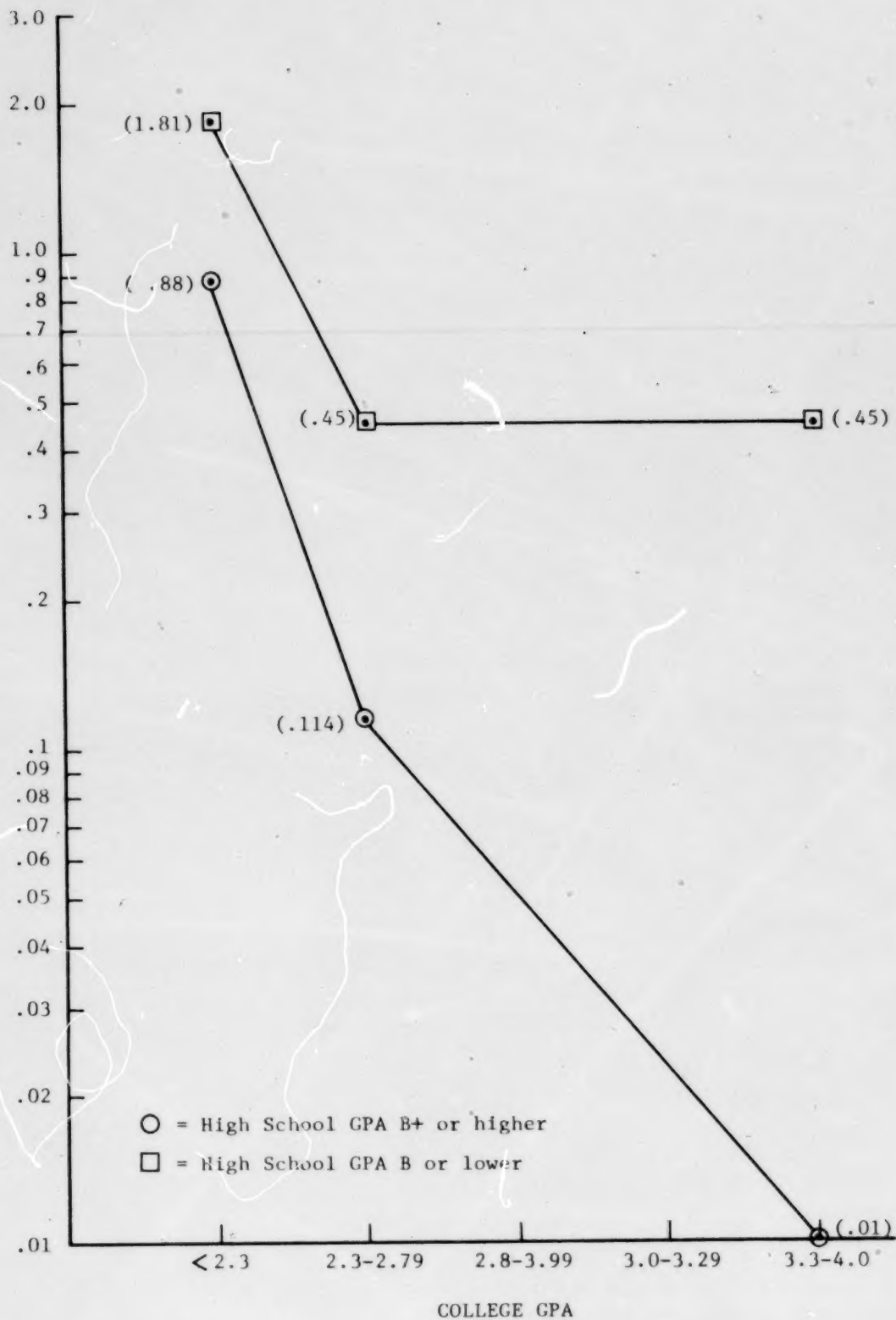
Table 1. CONTINUED

Variable	Continuing Students	Failing Dropouts	Dropouts in Good Standing	Failing Transfers	Transfers in Good Standing
<u>Alternative Lifestyles</u>					
Number of days in last month used pot	3.0	4.3	6.0**	5.7	6.6**
"Identify" with those who use drugs? (% "yes")	10	16	24**	9	27**
Would like to live in a commune (4=most)	2.1	2.4	2.5*	2.2	2.4*

¹ Figures are means unless otherwise specified.

* Different from continuing students at $p \leq .05$.

** Different from continuing students at $p \leq .01$.



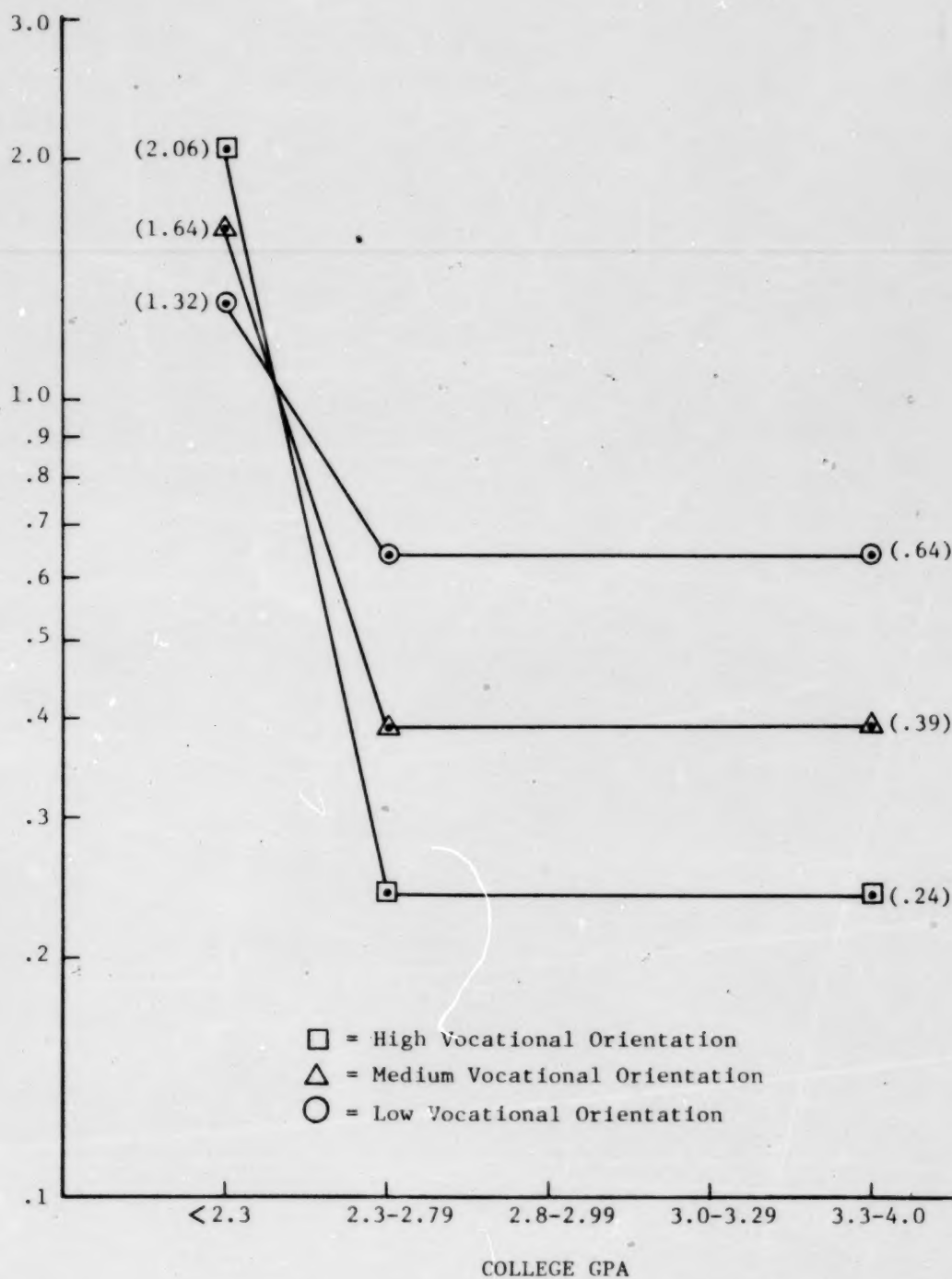


Figure 2. Effects of Vocational Orientation and College GPA on Leaving College

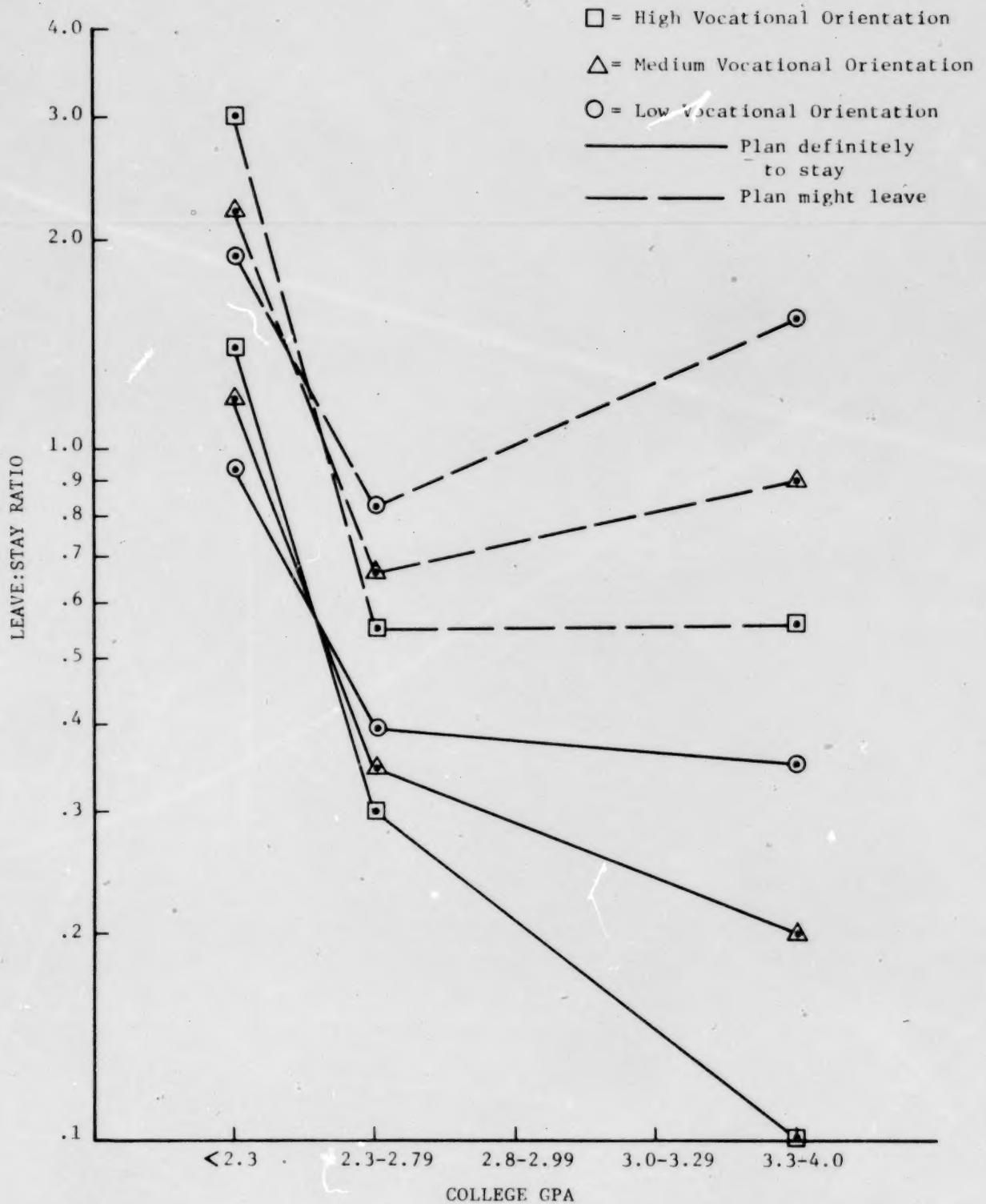


Figure 3. Effects of Plans to Remain Enrolled, Vocational Orientation and College GPA on Leaving College

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